DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 391 626 RC 020 439

AUTHOR VanSciver, James H.; Bhaerman, Robert
TITLE Integrating Education, Health, and Social Services: A New Role for Delaware's Schools?
INSTITUTION Research for Better Schools, Inc., Philadelphia, Pa.
PUB DATE [95]
NOTE 7p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Advocacy; *Community Services; Cooperative Programs; Delivery Systems; Elementary Secondary Education; Health Services; Institutional Cooperation; *Integrated Services; Planning; *Rural Schools; School Community Relationship; *School Role; *Shared Facilities; Social Services
IDENTIFIERS *Delaware; Networking; *Rural Assistance Councils

ABSTRACT

This paper reports on recommendations resulting from a 1994 conference conducted by the Delaware Rural Assistance Council on "Designing Rural Schools as Community Learning and Service Centers." Specifically, the purpose of the conference was to develop information, insights, and plans that would help the staffs of educational, health, and social service agencies make decisions leading to better coordination of rural community services. Participants included administrators, teachers, counselors, nurses, support staff, and school board members from rural school districts in Delaware and representatives of community health and social services agencies. A number of key concepts and recommendations were generated, dealing with identifying stakeholders involved in the process of designing rural schools as community learning and service centers; identifying the essential needs of children, youth, and families; developing initial action plans; and exploring ways in which existing county interagency councils can work more closely with schools. Twenty-five recommendations directed toward the Delaware RAC, school districts, and community service agencies cover advocacy, networking, and planning strategies for integrating services in rural school districts. (LP)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 391 626

INTEGRATING EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND SOCIAL SERVICES: A NEW ROLE FOR DELAWARE'S SCHOOLS?

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Peter J. Donahoe
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

James H. VanSciver
Superintendent, Lake Forest School District
Chairperson, Delaware Rural Assistance Council

Robert Bhaerman
Senior Research and Development Specialist,
Research for Better Schools

During the spring of 1994, the Delaware Rural Assistance Council (RAC) conducted a conference on "Designing Rural Schools as Community Learning and Service Centers." The conference was, in fact, a follow-up to earlier events the RAC had sponsored -- two public forums designed to obtain informed testimony on two of the previously proposed State Board of Education goals: (1) building consensus and support for quality education and (2) promoting partnerships to improve the academic and social success of students. The RAC felt that it was essential that broad input be obtained on these goals that seemed particularly relevant to rural communities. The participants proposed a number of recommendations dealing with the desirability of rural schools becoming comprehensive community learning and service centers.

Both the testimony and the recommendations presented at the two public forums asserted the view that education, health, and social agencies must (1) combine their resources and work better together in order to deliver their services to those who need them in the most effective manner possible, and (2) make services available in a location known to most people in rural Delaware, namely, in the local schools. Such reconfiguration will require these delivery agencies to revamp their relationships and to redefine their individual roles in order to achieve the desired results. That often is a difficult task for the people who are in these agencies since they are deeply immersed in their traditional relationships and roles.

RC 020439

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The purpose of the 1994 follow-up conference, therefore, was to develop information, insights, and plans that will help the staffs of education, health, and social service agencies make decisions that will lead to better services for all children, youth, and adults in their communities.

The conference was held on March 11, 1994 at the Sheraton Inn in Dover. Over 140 persons who registered for the conference represented the majority of Delaware's rural school districts (as well as several in New Jersey) and included administrators, teachers, counselors, nurses, support staff, school board members, and representatives of community health and social service agencies.

The format consisted of a morning session which involved panel discussions on "Visions and Goals" and "Practices, Problems, and Promises." The panelists in the "visioning" session included Lieutenant Governor Ruth Ann Minner; Dr. Pat Forgione, Superintendent of the Department of Public Instruction (DPI); Mr. Thomas Eichler, Secretary of the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families; and Ms. Carmen Nazario, Secretary of the Department of Health and Social Services. Panelists in the "practices" session included Mrs. Valerie Woodruff, DPI, as well as representatives of service integration programs in Maryland and New Jersey. In the afternoon session, participants formed small groups to develop initial plans for their schools and communities. In the concluding session, the groups presented their reports and recommendations. In addition, the conference included a keynote address by Dr. Rene L. "Jay" Bouchard, President, the National Rural Education Association.

A number of key concepts and recommendations were generated, including those dealing with identifying stakeholders involved in the process of designing rural schools as community learning and service centers; identifying the essential needs of children, youth, and families; developing initial action plans; and exploring ways in which the existing county interagency councils can work more closely with schools.

The participants also recommended a number of specific actions. The first is directed to the Delaware RAC; the remaining ones are directed to LEAs and community service agencies.

The recommendations are categorized into three types: (1) advocacy recommendations since all Delaware schools (not just rural schools) are affected; (2) networking recommendations since the tasks ahead of us cannot be accomplished by any single individual or group; and (3) planning recommendations.

Advocacy Recommendations

(1) The Delaware RAC should broaden future dialogues to include more parents so that action plans are built with, not for, those parents who are most directly responsible for effecting change.

(2) Be advocates at the local and state levels for children, youth, and families who are in greatest need of services -- from birth onward. Press for the creation of Family Resource Centers in each district.

(3) Bring energy to bear on changing funding patterns to provide greater financial support for expanding school facilities and service integration programming. Such patterns should be flexible so that funds can be allocated to the areas of greatest needs.

(4) Support enabling legislation to allow (a) more flexibility in building design, usage, and construction (since current space often does not allow for community usage); and (b) alternative systems of school-based management that might be more responsive to community needs, in general, and student needs, in particular.

Networking Recommendations

(5) Ascertain the needs of the community (children, youth, and families) and do not assume that we know them a priori.

(6) Work with parents and families to teach children and youth positive value systems, i.e., there is "another side of the value systems" than those that often are seen on TV screens.

(7) Involve the state association of visiting teachers to provide information and insights on school attendance issues.

(8) "Take the show on the road," i.e., communicate directly with those in need of services so they become aware of the paths out of their adversity. (Do not only "preach to the choir.")

(9) Make certain that community residents play meaningful roles and have a real sense of ownership for programs developed with (not for) them.

(10) Act on the suggested ways in which county interagency councils and schools can work more closely together.

Planning Recommendations

(11) Plan strategically in involving many more persons in "partnership groups."

(12) Consider extending the hours and days that schools are open. (This would require enabling legislation.)

(13) Provide satellite service centers in (or near) schools so they can be used without the school staff being totally responsible for meeting every need of everyone.

(14) Expand kindergartens to full time.

(15) Expand the Wellness Centers to the elementary grades and to full-service Family Resource Centers.

(16) Consider near-school locations for service centers since physical separation from the school campus might enable community members to clearly understand role distinctions.

(17) Broaden adult education and literacy programs so that adults who have not completed their schooling can have a second chance, thus making schools truly "community learning and service centers."

(18) Utilize a central intake/contact person to coordinate and assist with implementing all available services.

(19) Share relevant information with all agencies and schools in order to avoid duplication, conflicting "stories" -- and frustration.

(20) Provide cross-agency training of school and agency personnel in order to explore common problems -- and solutions.

(21) Incorporate school-to-work activities into the program so that school completion (or incompletion) is not a dead-end for youths or adults.

(22) Incorporate service-learning activities into the program so that students learn to develop greater interest in serving their communities.

(23) Open up schools to all adults (including school dropouts) for educational, health, and social services.

(24) Go back to your organizations and identify a liaison person or persons to follow through on these recommendations; establish a broad-based local steering committee.

(25) End the rhetoric; begin action planning and implementation.

At a Delaware RAC meeting following the conference, the members decided to do precisely what Recommendation #25 called for, namely, end the rhetoric and initiate strategies to begin action planning and implementation. To that end, the RAC conducted a follow-up workshop in the spring of 1995 to move forward on these issues, further explore the recommendations, and continue to plan and implement local service integration efforts. The beneficiaries ultimately will be the children, youth, and families whom we all serve.

[Note: A summary of the work of the Rural Assistance Council in this area is available. For a copy of the Delaware RAC Report, Voices of Rural Educators and the Rural Community: On Integrating Education, Health, and Social Services, please contact Dr. Robert Bhaerman, Research for Better Schools, 444 North Third Street, Philadelphia, PA., 19123-4107.]

SIDEBAR

The mission of the Rural Assistance Council is "...to identify the needs of Delaware's rural schools; develop plans for attending to those needs in cooperation with appropriate state organizations; outline an agenda for carrying out the plans; and enlist the assistance of these organizations in carrying out their plans." The council is made up of fifteen members who represent such organizations as the Delaware State Grange, the Delaware Farm Bureau, the Delaware Electric Cooperative, the Latino Empowerment Association of Delaware, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Child Care Connection, the Delaware School Boards Association, The Delaware State Education Association, the Delaware Association of School Administrators, the Sussex County Voc-Tech School District, and the DPI.